



Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

The Christian Wisdom
that Must Rule

HOPE

TOMORROW AND TOMORROW

THE SHINING, NOT THE CANDLE

THE BIBLE — AN INFALLIBLE GUIDE

MEGIDDO MESSAGE INDEX FOR 1958

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

DECISION

Megiddo Message

December 27, 1958 Vol. 45, No. 26
Kenneth E. Flowerday, Acting Editor

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
- Bring peace and stability to your life

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"If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

—Proverbs 2: 3—5.

LETTERS

Thought-Provoking

My Dear Friends:

I enclose renewal of your inspiring MEGIDDO MESSAGE," which is thought-provoking and helpful in so many ways.

Love and blessings to you God-inspired people.

Sincerely and prayerfully yours,
Rochester, N. Y.

Mrs. J. M. S.

Glad to Know

Dear Friends:

I am very glad to know Truth from error, even though I have to live with an Xmas Tree for a week or two.

No, we should never be contented for what we are, but should always keep trying to improve ourselves; for we never know how near we are to our end.

We must work with all our mind, might and strength to be accepted by the great Judge of all the earth, when that Day comes, that we all have to stand before the Great White Throne.

Lowville, N. Y.

Mrs. A. M. Z.

Scars and Their Healing

Dear Friends:

Some one, of his vacation last summer, said that it still lingers in his memory. He had watched the ocean waves and thought how much they are like the goodness and patience of God. He watched the children dig great wounds in the sand with their little spades, leaving scars on the golden surface. Then, quietly, the tide would turn, and every trace of the scars would be covered, leaving the shining surface of the sand as smooth as ever. This, from the mind of one who had been through turmoil, laden with scars.

How oft we see that when the mercy and love of God is applied, how soon the scars are healed and the healing grace brings forth new life and a new spirit. The sea is never tired of changing scars on the beach, and God never faints at His task of remaking the spirits of those who put their trust in Him. God has His spiritual tides that remake the heart like the tides that obliterate the scars made by little children on the beach. James 5: 11 says that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

It is a great thing to know, if we are worthy, that God is our Friend.

Danville, Va.

M. G.

Drawing Power

Dear Friends:

I do so love that little paper. It gets me closer to God every time I read and peruse it.

Wingham, Ont.

Mrs. A. D. H.

The Christian Wisdom that Must Rule

INDEED and in truth we should realize what wonderful love God has manifested and how longsuffering He has been to the children of men, how longsuffering He has been with us. Until we do realize what great things God has done for us, we will never have truly thankful hearts. We need to wake up and have our senses exercised to realize what He has done for us. Truly, God, the Mighty Creator of this universe, is love.

Paul's letter to the Colossians was sent to supply their spiritual needs, to correct evident moral laxity and domestic disturbances. It insists that unless the gospel builds up character, fashions conduct, and lifts the whole life to the standard of things above, it is nothing and worse than nothing. In his eagerness for their growth in the divine life, he includes a prayer for their spiritual progress. He stresses also that obedience to outward rules may leave sin and self actually unconquered. The necessity of union with the risen and glorified Christ is included, and the moral results of such a union.

He urges His brethren to be raised from their low ambitions and to aim at things above. Aim at that knowledge that comes from afar, then at the future blessings Christ will bring to those who grow by it.

The apostle, in his fatherly care for the Colossian Church, lists a number of evil habits which must be abolished, put to death, crucified, to give place to the new nature which Christ's true disciples must acquire, and the Christlike qualities which must be appropriated. Impurity, appetite, evil desire, idolatry, anger, rage, slander, foul talk must be completely submerged and overcome by compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, good temper, forbearance, forgiveness, and above all Christian love, "for love is the link of a perfect life."

He also reminds them of the principles which they must allow to regulate their conduct, even in the closest family relation: of husband and wife, parent and children and *vice versa*. He includes a word even to slaves and masters and masters and slaves, urging the practice of prayerfulness and discretion; and climaxes the message saying, "Let Christian wisdom rule your behavior to the outside world" (Col. 4:6, Moffatt), and his message reaches down even to us.

Some Details of Christian Wisdom

We often have had persons ask what the commandments are. They feel that if the Ten Commandments are not our specific rule of life, there should be something equally clear to take their place. Chapters 3 and 4 of this letter to the Colossians is just that. Here we find direction to Christians, detailing the wisdom that must rule their behavior to all—in the church and the outside world, then and now.

"Tell no lies to one another; you have stripped off the old nature with its practices, and put on the new nature" (3:9). We might consider it far beneath our Christian dignity to tell what is sometimes called a black lie, although we might tell a white lie without feeling too condemned. But Paul made no such distinction. He said:

"Tell no lies," either white or black. The one condemns us as surely as the other. Just a little prevarication is a sin, and must be stripped off if we would stand approved when we appear before the King of all the earth.

The old nature is the old man, and the new nature is the new man. What a wonderful change it is, once we have stripped off our old crabbed nature, and have adopted one governed by the impulses of the new man!

Hence Paul commands: "Put on the new nature, which is renewed in the likeness of its Creator for the knowledge of him" (v. 10).

If ruled by Christian wisdom, we cannot have our own disposition. We cannot act as we would. We cannot speak or think as we naturally would, and the same rule applies to all, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or freeman.

"As God's own chosen," oh, if doing this, if stripping off the old nature and putting on the new, you are God's chosen, then, "as consecrated and beloved, be clothed with compassion." Have a compassionate feeling for others and remove that spirit of selfishness and indifference. Then the apostle adds, "have kindness, humility." Oh, be clothed with humility. That is a vital element in this robe of righteousness—right doing, that we must put on.

As the prime virtue, the apostle names charity or love as "the golden chain of all the virtues," the fastener or bond that links us with Christian perfection. If we love God, we will keep His commandments; it will be our delight to obey our loving heavenly Father. If we love our brother, we will try to help him keep our Father's commandments. And if we love him, we will show him warmth and affection. We will help him bear his cross; we will slip a helping hand under his load and try to assist him over the difficult places in his Christian journey. We will speak a word to encourage, to help and strengthen him. We will try to impart to him a portion of the bright hope of coming glory that we ourselves have, and encourage him to work and wait a little longer for the dawning of a better day that is certain to arrive. If we love our brother, we will do all within our power to encourage him, and at the same time, we will not fail to point out to him where he is treading on dangerous ground, to tell him of his shortcomings so that he can correct them before they become fatal.

An important virtue listed among the Christian graces is peace. "Let the peace of Christ be supreme within your hearts,"—oh, this peace of God! "Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them." Let this peace of Christ be supreme within your hearts—that is why you have been called as members of one body. Christ is the head, and the Church the members. If we let the peace of Christ be supreme in our hearts, we will be at peace with God and at peace with one another. We will be at peace with every one kindly disposed to God's plan.

If you would let Christian wisdom rule your behavior, try to avoid hearing songs that tend to degrade rather than build up. For we are here directed to "teach and train one another with the music of psalms" (v. 16), teach and edify one another with songs of the spiritual life. Take joy and comfort in that.

Then Paul continues in Colossians 3, "Praise God with thankful hearts." That will be the theme of our songs. If we praise God with thankful hearts, there will be no place for murmurings and complainings. "Indeed, whatever you say or do, let everything be done in dependence on the Lord Jesus," and on His Word, His Truth, "giving thanks in His name to God the Father."

Some Specific Applications

In this Christian wisdom there is a special duty, special advice to those in wedlock: "Wives, be subject to your husbands. That is your proper duty in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, do not be harsh to them." Have forbearance. There never was an age when there was so much trouble, so much discord among families, so many divorces, but God does not condone it. Then, to the family, he advises: "Children, obey your parents at every point, for this pleases the Lord right well. Fathers, avoid irritating your children, in case they get dispirited." A good example is required of parents, for it is perfectly natural for children to imitate. No wonder there is so much temper among children. They see so much of it in their parents.

To the employed, the rule for Christian wisdom is: "Servants, obey your masters here below at every point; do not work simply when their eye is on you, like those who court human favor, but serve them with a single heart out of reverence for your Lord and Master." There is no distinction with the Almighty. You are just as good in God's sight as if you were the employer, but be honest in your work. The children should be brought up to work just the same whether someone's eye is on them or not. They have to grow into it by training and discipline.

"Whatever your task, work at it heartily, as servants of the Lord and not of men." Whatever your work may be, take an interest in it. That is one trouble in the world today. They do not do that. "Remember, you will receive from the Lord the inheritance which is your due." If you are working for some one who does not appreciate your work, and is not thankful for what you do, do not become discouraged; "remember, you will receive from the Lord the inheritance which is your due; serve Christ your Lord and Master, for the wrongdoer will be paid back for his wrong doing—there will be no favor shown." No. In that day, the only favor that will be shown is to those who have worked righteousness and have kept God's commandments.

Then here is the word of advice to the employer, "Masters, treat your servants justly and fairly." If you have someone working for you, treat them fairly, with justice and kindness, always remembering that "you have a Master of your own in heaven." Be humble, be obedient.

"Attend to your prayers, maintain your zest for prayer by thanksgiving." That is something we are apt to forget. But let us never forget to pray. Paul said, "Pray for me as well, that God may give me an opening for the word, to speak of the open secret" or revealed truths "of Christ, for which I am in custody. Pray that I may unfold it as I should." Paul was humble. He realized he needed their prayers. He said, you pray that I may unfold the gospel as I should. And how we need to pray for one another!

Wisdom in Use of Time

"Let Christian wisdom rule your behavior to the out-

side world." If governed by Christian wisdom, you will be careful, you will watch your behavior, and especially your conversation when with the world. We must watch self all the time, but when with the world we must especially watch to see that we are not led into something wrong. We must have Christian behavior. There is danger in getting too familiar. But so act, and so talk, that the world, if they are at all observing, will perceive that we are Christ's true followers, that we are governed by something different, controlled by a higher principle.

Then Paul continues: "Make the very most of your time." That is much like the command in Eph. 5, "Redeem the time, because the days are evil." "Make the very most of your time; let your talk always have a saving salt of grace about it," govern your talk before the outside world. Of course, they are not under God's law. We claim to be under it, but are we wholly governed by it? If not, we are not allowing Christian wisdom to govern us before them. "And learn to answer any question put to you." Answer governed by wisdom, governed by the Word of God. That is something to do. We cannot tell everything we know, but let it be governed by that salt of Truth; have the saving salt of grace.

Oh, that thought of redeeming the time! That is a great thing to do right among ourselves. Christian wisdom teaches us to always redeem the time. It is so easy to waste time. We must be on our watch and guard or we will not always redeem it when gathered together in a group. Hours may be wasted conversing on matters which provide no spiritual uplift. Time is precious. Death might step upon the scene any moment and terminate our day of salvation, and in any case, we have not years and years of time.

While we do not know just the time of Christ's coming, we must watch that it does not take us unawares. Yes, we will know the times and seasons, said Paul. We have evidence enough so that that Day need not take us unawares. He said, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." So we want to be up and doing, wide awake while we have the time given us.

Other Scriptures on Wisdom

The Apostle James provides a timely and practical thought on letting Christian wisdom rule our behavior (ch. 3:3), "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom."

It is obvious that to be wise men and endued with knowledge in the sense in which the Apostle James wished to express it, covers a great deal more than merely good judgment and prudence in the management of our temporal affairs through life.

The word "wisdom," as used in the English language, is defined as "mental power acting upon the material that fullest knowledge gives, in the most effective way. In its fullest sense wisdom implies the noblest exercise of all the faculties of the moral nature as well as of the intellect." As used by the apostle the word carries an idea related to the definition just given: "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." The man doing this will surely be letting Christian wisdom rule his behavior.

This wisdom from above, demanding as it does the noblest exercise of all the functions of the moral nature as well as of the intellect, is likened by Jesus to a "pearl of great price," to obtain which, a man should be willing to sell all that he has. The Prophet Job said its value was far above all the valuable elements known in his time (Job 28), placing the price thereof far above rubies. In Proverbs 3:13-18 it is guaranteed to make its possessor happy: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding: for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." The reason for the high valuation of this commodity, wisdom: "Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor. . . . She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her." Indeed, Christian wisdom is the principal thing.

This spiritual wisdom is taken for true piety or the fear of God: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). The wisdom of the prudent is demonstrated by his ability and willingness to "understand his way" (Prov. 14:8). A man must let Christian wisdom rule his behavior to be able to understand his own ways. We think it is easy enough to understand the ways of others, the hidden motive that impels them to act as they do; but the ability to correctly judge and evaluate self is a sure sign that we are endowed with Christian wisdom.

To intelligently prosecute the work of regenerating self requires knowledge and experience and the earnest application of Christian wisdom. Knowledge comes only by reading and study, while experience and true wisdom come by the application of the knowledge gained, by exercising our senses that we may be able to discern between good and evil. Then with our tongue bridled by Truth, we shall be able to show out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom, and with Christian wisdom ruling our behavior we can be an "example of the believers in word, in conduct, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

Hope

NOTHING in the world is more powerful than hope. It is the motivating force behind the world's greatest achievements. The doctor in the research laboratory hopes for a cure for cancer; the scientist hopes for the discovery of another element; the rocket expert hopes to reach the moon! the farmer hopes to reap a good crop from the spring seed he has sown—in fact man's whole operation is based on hope. The lives of men from the top executive to the common laborer are governed by hope in one form or another.

And what of the Christian's hope? Paul says that we are saved by it; Jeremiah writes that the man possessing it is blessed; Job described his hope in unforgettable words when he wrote, "I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth

. . . whom I shall see for myself." The Psalmist sings praises unto the God that is his hope, saying, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." The Wise Man writes that there is hope for a man as long as he lives; yet Paul says that this is not enough. We must use this life to lengthen and strengthen our hope for this is the only chance we will have. Our hope must reach out beyond the comforts and desires of this life to show us the things that God has prepared for them that love Him.

Hope, we read, is "as an anchor to the soul." It is what holds us safe on the rock in the midst of a stormy sea. It is what makes us hold on and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us, even as Christ endured the cross for the joy set before him. It is what enables us to put off the "old man" and put on the new; to add to our character the necessary fruits of the Spirit until we are found without fault before the throne of God.

To accomplish these things, hope must be a vital and important part in the life of a Christian. A hope strong enough to save must be something powerful. It is not something that is acquired in a moment, but rather it is gained by weeks, months and years of trials and troubles.

"Taken in the right spirit these very things will give us patient endurance; this in turn will develop a mature character, and a character of this sort produces a steady hope, a hope that will never disappoint us" (Rom. 5:3-5, Phillips).

Faith and hope seem to have a strong connection. If we are without faith, we are without hope, for our faith is in the things hoped for. Without faith, we are told, we cannot please God; and if we are to follow Jesus, our Pattern, we must please God. Jesus wrote of Himself, "I do *always* those things that please him." He did not say that He *sometimes* did things to please Him or that He did things to please Him when it was convenient; but He *always* pleased Him. The more we do the things which are right and pleasing in His sight, the easier it becomes.

"In this life we have three great lasting qualities—faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them is love" (I Cor. 13:13, Phillips). No doubt love is the greatest, for unless we have this love, we are not pleasing God. But without sufficient faith and hope combined with the love, we would not be trying our best every day to please God. We gain faith by daily reading the Word of God and meditating on it. And as we strengthen our faith, we strengthen our hope; and as our hope grows, we try the harder to reach our goal when we shall see the glory of the Lord on this earth.

When "the inhabitant shall not say I am sick"; when "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing"; when the "desert shall blossom as the rose"; when "God himself shall be with them, and be their God . . . and shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying"; then will we rejoice in the glory of the Lord and our hope will have saved us.

Never forget this: A selfish heart desires love for itself—a Christian heart delights to love—without return. Each individual has some contribution to make to life and to each person he comes in contact with.

Tomorrow and Tomorrow

IT WAS a glorious morning. Last night the hoarfrost had lain thick on the hillside, but the genial, friendly sun had soon driven it away. For four days now there had been no rain, and the crisp air was like rare wine. From the bare trees by the river came the liquid warble of a lone and foolish bulbul, almost as merry in the lean days of Chislev as in the mating-moon of spring. The brown landscape dreamed contentedly in the sunshine; the earth smiled its gigantic smile as the year seemed to pause that all God's creatures might enjoy its mellow mood. That man who fails to respond to such a day, whose soul does not expand with the sheer joy of living, must be either a dyspeptic or a soulless clod.

And so Elisha sang—loudly, carelessly, melodiously—as he followed the plow on this glorious morning. The moist earth, warmer than the air, felt good under his bare feet. He had removed his sandals that he might enjoy its warmth. A large field, this, as fields in this little land go. Half a mile long by half as wide, lying on the narrow fertile plain between the hills and the river, it was by far the best piece of land on this side. Shaphat's forebears had chosen their heritage shrewdly and well. To the east rose the gentle hill on which gleamed the whitewashed dwellings of Abel-meholah, his native village, with the mighty mountains as a background. Westward rolled the tawny flood of the Jordan, with the limitless plain beyond.

In a long slanting line up the field stretched the plowmen—twelve of them, with twelve yoke of oxen. Twelve shining black furrows, steadily eating into the great brown rectangle. Elisha surveyed the ordered line of men and beasts with approval. Twelve yoke! Not bad for a simple farmer. True, the beasts might be in better condition, but after three years of drought and famine, one was fortunate to have a draught-animal of any description. Most of his neighbors were destitute in this respect. The oxen were thin, but the spring sunshine would soon flush the lowland grass. Not long to wait, poor creatures!

To most of the village and country side the drought had spelled ruin. Not so with Shaphat, his father. A time of distress had provided him with opportunities in abundance. Ready cash is power. His holdings of land had more than doubled. He had lent to a score of his neighbors. He had unbounded faith in the future of the country—and in the ability of his eldest son to administer his great estates successfully after he should be gathered to his fathers. Elisha squared his strong young shoulders with determination. Some day—God forbid that it should be soon—these broad acres would be his. He would justify his father's faith. A successful farmer, a just, upright neighbor, and finally a great man would he be, living the life of a feudal landlord, with cattle and goods and lands in abundance. His name should be honored in the street and young men should rise up before him. His sons and daughters should grow up as olive plants about his table, and occupy posts of renown in the nation. When he should retire from active pursuits, Abel-meholah should be his special care. He would make his native town the wonder of the Jordan valley. Long would he be remembered as its wise and liberal counsellor and

benefactor. His secret ambition—

What ails that lead driver, that he should break his harness just at this time! Rest, Huz! Rest Buz! It's all a lively man can do to keep from running over these leaden-footed plowboys!

This drought—strange how suddenly it had been broken. Three long years and more of burning sunshine and dry winds, until the ground became like a millstone and the bed of the Jordan lay nearly bare. Shaphat's fields, being the best watered in the neighborhood, had produced a small crop the first year. The second season he had speculated in sheep, grazing them in the shaded mountain glens where grass still grew. The third, being a good farmer with faith and vision, he had devoted to improvements in his buildings and fences.

Then, when it seemed that the autumn rains would fail for the fourth time and even Shaphat's heart grew sick, came a joyful day when the skies grew black with clouds and wind and the parched earth welcomed the cooling torrents. After that came the gentle, penetrating rains, day after day, softening the soil and washing away the evil memories of the long thirst.

There was still time for both barley and wheat sowing. Shaphat had jealously conserved a goodly store of seed grain, and now his storehouse was opened, both for himself and for his neighbors. Those unable to pay were not refused; Elisha's father, though shrewd and a hard business man in some respects, was not unmindful of the poor. From dawn until dark the long slanting line of oxen crawled slowly up and down the fields, plowing under the precious seed.* It was good to be able to work once more, with the hope of a reward. And so Elisha sang—a vintage melody from the winepresses of En-gedi.

A few weeks of sunshine, and then the harvest. Elisha glowed inwardly. What a harvest there would be, after two years of rest—and what profits! Truly a gift of God, the opportunity of a lifetime. Samaria would pay well for corn. Damascus, too, had suffered, and prices there would be high. Much depended on this year's luck and management. He must think about investments. For one thing, he would buy that long-desired farm across the river. The present owner was shiftless and incompetent, and would sell at Elisha's own price. Second, he would take advantage of the shortage of domestic animals. Half a talent of silver invested in Egyptian horses and cattle would easily be trebled in this stricken land. He should be seeing to that now, while the need was the greatest, but this plowing was more important. He hoped he would not lose all this tempting market to the Canaanitish traders.

A flock of partridges, emboldened by hunger, stole furtively across the furrow and fed in the newly-scattered grain. Elisha did not drive them away: let them eat, poor birds; their pickings had been slender enough for a long time. He would never miss what they took.

* "Sowing . . . took place without previous plowing, the seed being scattered broadcast, and plowed in afterwards. The soil was then brushed over with a light harrow, often of thorn bushes. Mountains and steep places were hoed. During the rains, if not too heavy, or between their two periods, would be the best time for these operations." —Smith's *Bible Dictionary*.

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Up, Huz! this is no time to lag! The day is young, but darkness comes so soon.

Yes—pleasant thought—with this harvest reaped and sold, he would first provide for the poor in his own town; then with his father and mother and a substantial offering, he would appear before the Eternal in Jerusalem on the Day of Atonement. A long journey, and harder to find time for, now that he had undertaken the management of this farm. For the life of him, he didn't see how he could get away next Passover. Well, he *would* go, even if something else suffered. What a pity that Israel had forsaken the true and living God! Nowhere in the land was there a temple or synagogue for His worship. In every city and village stood altars to those imported abominations, the Phoenician Baal and Ashtaroth. Not in Abel-meholah, however, Shaphat had too much influence there. A little group met secretly in his house each Sabbath to hear the law read and expounded by a man of God, a fugitive from Jezebel's massacre of the sons of the prophets.

His secret ambition—if the Eternal should continue to prosper the work of his hand, and it became safe to do so, he would some day build a modest house for the public worship of Jehovah in Abel-meholah. His native town, nestled on the knees of the mountains of Gilboa, might yet be a rallying point, a place of pilgrimage, a center of religious life and vitality, known and respected to the farthest boundaries of the kingdom. And in the background, smiling in fatherly satisfaction, would stand Elisha. He craved no glory of men for himself, but how could a successful man better employ his time and means? Only a dream, but a pleasant dream. He sang again—a psalm of David which he had learned in Jerusalem a year ago.

Under present conditions such a thing would of course be impossible. The times were about as bad as they could be, but better days were coming. In fact, it seemed that the reform had already begun. Eight hundred and fifty of the foreign priestly parasites would never again seduce the people or eat at Jezebel's table. It looked like a death-blow to idolatry. His pulse quickened and his hands closed hard on the handles of the plow as he thought of the stirring events of the day of the great rain. He had heard of it from eyewitnesses. It must have been magnificent beyond words. He himself had been bidden to the test on Carmel, but on that day his strongest ox had fallen sick. He did not go, and he had regretted it ever since. Jehovah had never forsaken His people utterly. When the time was ripe He had always raised up a deliverer, from the time of Moses to this day. And this new champion was truly a champion worthy of and equal to the task. Elijah the Tishbite! If any man could turn an apostate king and people back to the faith, it was he. A strange man, stern and inflexible, whom even Ahab feared and respected. At the thought of his great deeds, a scrap of an old battle-song from the book of Jasher mounted to the farmer's lips.

Elisha knew him; twice Shaphat's home had been honored by his presence as the Tishbite journeyed up and down the land. Under the spell of his words and personality, young Elisha had almost been tempted to leave all and follow him. Elisha—a prophet! He smiled now at the thought of his youthful absurdity. In fact, even his father had at one time urged him to enter the school of the prophets, Israel's only reserve of spiritual leadership

since the days of Jeroboam. For a time Elisha had entertained the thought—then came the winter plowing. Well, it would have been a grand thing, a life of active service to the Eternal, but that was clearly out of the question now, with all these farms to oversee. He was no prophet, but would strive to serve his God by tilling the soil well and using his gains to his Creator's glory.

Another corner! The sun was high; the oxen must be rested more frequently. His eye rested on the rich plain across the river—his future possession. Next year—A beautiful procession of clouds, like white sheep, was straying down from the peaks of Gilboa and spreading over the valley. Down the narrow road Elisha espied a lone foot-passenger trudging toward the ford. He hoped it might be a vagabond laborer with a strong back. He needed men today; some of the small hillside fields must be broken up with mattocks; his sowers could scarcely keep ahead of the plowmen—everything seemed to be behind, and the work progressed so slowly! Up, Buz! we shall rest at the great stone where the water jugs lie!

The traveler was at the river's brink now. He should be careful; the ford was treacherous in flood time. Elisha paused to watch him as he waded the swift brown current, thigh-deep, and took the road toward Abel-meholah. No help from that quarter, it seemed. Then on, on, up the field crawled the long slanting line of men and oxen. Tomorrow, if the rain held off, this field should be finished. Then the few hillside plots, while the weary cattle rested in their stalls until another break in the weather should permit the sowing of the later crops.

His mind went back to the great scene on Carmel, and its meaning to the nation. He had hoped that the reform movement would immediately sweep the nation, but such was not the will of the Eternal. Jezebel's wrath had known no bounds, and the Tishbite had fled, a hunted man. However, Elisha had no fears. He would come back, and suddenly. Such was his custom. And when he returned, who could tell what help from on high might accompany him? Right would triumph; there must be many in Israel who secretly confessed the true God. Jezebel could not live forever, and when it pleased the Eternal to remove her, the church, driven forward by the tremendous impact of Elijah's preaching and power, would again blossom and bud. Elisha's dream of a house of worship in Abel-meholah would be a reality; no longer need men bow before the Baals or the golden calves because the journey to Jerusalem was long and hard. In the meantime, this plowing—the days were so short. Tomorrow—and tomorrow—and tomorrow.

He had raised his head, to behold the lone traveler approaching. A rough garment of sheepskin; shaggy, flowing locks—instantly he recognized Elijah the Tishbite, the avenger of Carmel, the fugitive from the murderous wrath of the queen! At the word of Elisha the grateful animals stopped. The entire twelve yoke stood in their tracks. The drivers one and all gazed in awed wonder at the strange and impressive figure of the prophet, whose exploits had so recently been on every tongue. A character almost legendary, and now they beheld him with their own eyes!

Elisha wondered. Coming to see *him*? Apparently. Would he ask a refuge? He would hide him, even at the risk of his own life. If the prophet required money to further his work of reformation, all Shaphat's fortune should be at his command. Anything—everything!

As he drew near, Elisha trembled at the look in his face, for in it was still reflected some of the glory and ecstasy of his experience with the angel in the awful caverns and heights of Horeb the mount of God. He spoke no word of greeting, but came swiftly on, while Elisha stood quaking, his knees smiting together as a premonition of some great change held him rooted to the spot. This was to be no ordinary visit, that was certain. Tomorrow faded, blended into eternity. . . .

Face to face with the son of Shaphat, heir to the broad estates of Abel-meholah, the Tishbite turned aside as if to pass by without recognition. With one swift movement, he flung his mantle about Elisha's shoulders, and without a backward glance, strode swiftly down the furrow.

A great calm settled upon the young man's wondering soul as he realized in an instant that this was indeed the parting of the ways, that his old life with its cares, its toils, its hopes and ambitions, was forever ended. The summons admitted no thought of disregard or disobedience. The die was already cast; there was no turning back. Elisha the man of Abel-meholah had in that moment changed his relationship with the world and become Elisha the man of God. The things which had once bulked so large in his daily routine and his daydreams suddenly seemed childish and trivial in the face of this tremendous calling. The reaction was a sense of inadequacy, of profound humility, of the need of strength for the new life before him. Abandoning his plow, he ran after Elijah, crying in the unnatural voice with which we make the greatest declarations of our lives, "My father! My father!"

The Shining, not the Candle

IN HIS Sermon on the Mount, among many impressive thoughts, Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." In these words Jesus sets forth the true motive of Christian living. The light of His followers, the light of Truth, is the only light in the world; and we must let it shine out through us to guide the steps of others, and to illumine their inner lives, even as that light has made radiant our own life.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works"—not yourselves—"and glorify"—not you, but—"your Father which is in heaven." Self is entirely out of the picture. It is the *shining*, not the candle; it is God the Creator of the wondrous light and also of the lamp, that receives the glory, not ourselves.

Our purpose and calling is but one: *to shine*. Right close at hand there are many dark corners that we must illumine. It is for us to convert our varied abilities and opportunities into a shining light, to transform all our physical and mental resources into glory to God, to spend and be spent that Truth's light may radiate the path of others.

The world look dimly upon such a calling. They protest that it is throwing one's life away. But not so. There is a joy that few people understand: the joy of sharing God's beneficence, of doing good for others, of promoting a high and noble cause with heart and soul, to the exclusion of all selfish interests. Such a joy reaches far beyond that

meager joy which is to be gained from indulging one's fleshly desires. When we live for self, there is a limit—a narrow limit—to the sphere of our joy. When we labor for others, their joys become our joys. When we labor for God, the enjoyments of the universe become ours. "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully," and it is "the liberal soul" that "shall be made fat."

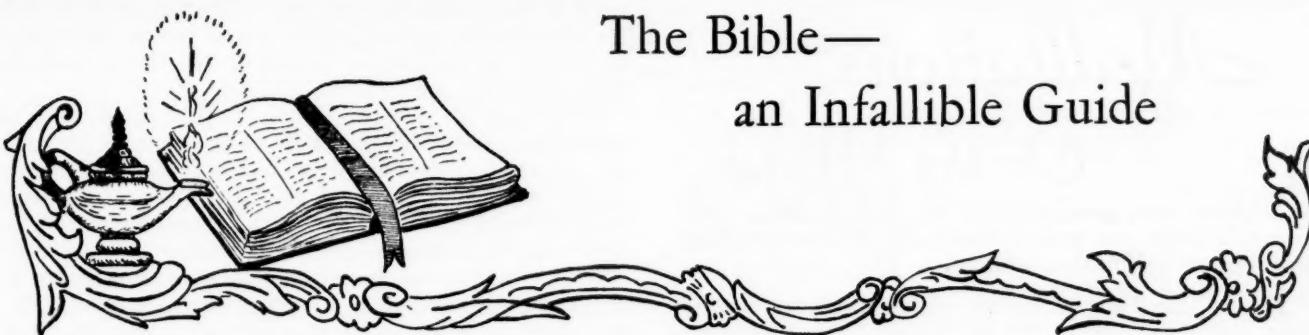
When the candle, rather than the light, becomes the object of attention, something is wrong. The light is too feeble. An over-industriousness in temporal affairs, resulting in a proportionate neglect of spiritual things, may draw admiring words for the candle, for "men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself" but the *light* of that candle may be very dim. When we are too busy to sit at the feet of Jesus, we are neglecting the shining. When our conversation has no salt of Truth about it, our candle has no light. To set our candle on a hill with great care is not sufficient—it is the *shining*, not the candle.

The natural mind is self-centered; it is continually seeking ways and means by which the candle may be glamourized; but that is not God's purpose. He has created us to be a resource of light. Our worth in God's eyes is measured in proportion to the light that we radiate. When a candle, even a candle of exquisite beauty, sends forth no light in the darkness, it is but an impediment, an object without usefulness, a stumblingblock. It becomes prey to jealousies, petty rivalries, pride, and selfishness, products of the darkness, influences that rot away that candle which is cold and damp and dark, the candle that has no shining. In the process of time all things that possess not the "light of life" crumble to decay. The dust returns to the earth as it was; and the breath returns unto God who gave it. Only the light of Truth burning in our souls can ward off these instruments of death and destruction.

God's ways are not man's ways; His thoughts are not man's thoughts. And godly men and women are not born, but trained to godliness. Forth from this schooling, the finest details of which are controlled by God, they come with broad vision, broad sympathies, fine, wholesome habits, spotless characters, with souls that have become a fountain of Truth's eternal light. In this schooling they have learned the formula for a great happiness. Among the lights of the great Jehovah there is no rank, no station, but an at-one-ment, a unity, every candle joyously pouring forth its light to the glory of its Maker, and each candle basking in the concentrated splendor of that combined glory.

Anything, Lord, for Thee, should be our prayer. *Anything*, though it mean filling a lowly place, cheerfully shining in an obscure corner, while others cast their light upon the crowded thoroughfares. God is directing our lives, and we can shine best in the place where He wills that we be. When sacrifice goes into the shining, the light glows the brighter for it. The richest fruits of talent, beauty, fame or gold, soon fade and die. If God wills that in this our mortal career some of those resources remain untapped, it is because He has a greater work for us to do. More to Him than all else, to Him who can reward beyond all our powers to ask or think, is the *shining* of a brightly burning candle.

In the great eternal Hereafter, that shining candle will not only be a reservoir of brilliance, but an immortal pillar of light within itself, which shall "shine as the stars for ever and ever."



The Bible— an Infallible Guide

THE Bible is our infallible and spiritual chart, and is ever ready to guide us in the smallest of our troubles, as well as the largest, for nothing that concerns God's children is too small for consideration or too large for investigation. To be great in the large things of life, we must be great in the smaller things first, and let humility and patience be our guide. In turning to our blessed Bible, we find solace and peace for body and mind and soul. The places of darkness become illuminated with light.

Let us be of good cheer and abide in the presence of His promise, "Surely I come quickly," and some day we shall understand. "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (Job 7: 6).

"But till the loom is silent, and the shuttles cease to fly,
Will God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skillful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned."

No doubt a large number of people who go to church, like to hear the Scriptures read, but dislike making application of their lessons to themselves. Some of them rejoice in the ancient Scriptures and wish them to remain ancient, because as soon as God's Word becomes a two-edged sword, piercing heart and conscience, they rebel; but let each one apply the principles of the sermon delivered to his own personal self. Many churchgoers are more concerned and prepared to criticize and to construe, or do anything with the Bible except apply its message and principles to themselves. We find much comfort and satisfaction in reading good books, and to many, it is a source of comfort and knowledge; but the Book for today is the grand old Bible, blessed and loved by God's obedient children. It is imperishable and unsurpassed as the greatest Book of all time. It is Almighty God's everlasting Word and message to mankind. It not only rebukes and guides, but comforts all people and leads them to Christ and the Kingdom of God.

In some ways, we find the Bible a most uncomfortable Book to read; its truths get beneath our skins; it probes our conscience; we cannot escape. We must listen, even if in our weakness we fail to obey, despite ourselves it hits us very hard. Truth, when it finds its mark, hurts very much. It is like a sword. When we read of the lives of the disciples, we know that through their shortcomings and their sins and failures, we unconsciously recognize our own. That is the great power of God's Holy Word. It is revealed in its ability to turn all its lessons back upon ourselves.

The Bible is the greatest Book ever written. It suits

all. No one can say that this or that portion is for others, or that it does not apply to his everyday life.

We read the Psalms, those outpourings of confessions from souls and contritions of penitent hearts. Lo, we discover the Psalmist is ourselves.

No better illustration can be found as an exemplification to endorse my statement than reading from the 119th Psalm, beginning at the 105th verse, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

Then we understand that the words Jesus spoke are no longer addressed to Pharisees, publicans or disciples, but to us. If we are attentive listeners, then we will find that that blessed Bible is indeed a great and wonderful guide.

The Bible is full of great examples, which are most remarkable in their application to spiritual inspiration, which must, in their mental calculations strengthen us by their different outstanding qualities in relation to our characters and to meet every difficult circumstance of our lives. To be strong in courage, let us remember Joshua; to be self-reliant, let us be like Nehemiah; for obedience, remember Abraham; be decisive like Moses; with an administrative ability like Solomon; above all censure, like David; longsuffering like Paul; of a strong prayerful character like the grand Prophets Elijah and Samuel; meek in our attitude like David, and master over our passions like Joseph. We need to put on the whole armor of God today, to fight this formidable foe. Passion makes man blind to reason, and greedy and ambitious for power. Let us surrender self in the same manner as Noah.

In our efforts to gain salvation, let us strive for the mastery and be godly like Enoch, pure in heart like the innocent Abel; clothed with the modesty of Ruth; to exercise the patience of Job; to be pious like King Hezekiah; and noble like the brave Stephen the martyr. Let us mold our character in keeping with the lives of these great God-fearing people as recorded in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, for truly they have set us a golden example of how to serve God and at the same time gain salvation.

Let us trust this infallible and spiritual chart. Let us study its pages carefully and prayerfully for it contains God's message to us. And whatever the Word speaks, let us hear it and heed it.

'Tis the one who's full of sunshine,
And who genuinely tries,
Who will clear the clouds of trouble
From his own and other's skies.

Meditations

On the Word

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise" (Ephesians 6: 1, 2).

This is excellent advice for children of any age or time, and especially so for the present time when the trend seems to be "parents obey your children, and respond faithfully to every one of their whims or notions." We should agree that a child who will not obey its parents is not much comfort to those parents, and such a child is making a bad start toward good citizenship, or becoming a practical Christian.

Recognition of authority is the first step toward accomplishment in many fields of human endeavor, especially those fields which require co-operation. Successful family life demands agreement between parents and co-operation on the part of the children. The same holds true in the association between employer and employees. The complex systems of modern industry could not function smoothly without a clear-cut definition of authority. A million-man army with the best of modern fighting equipment would be little more than a dangerous mob, were it not for the element of discipline.

Now the second of our meditation verses carries the thought of the former a step further, and includes the element of reward. "Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise." When a young child obeys its parents, we say that in that way it shows love for its parents. As the child advances in years and its powers of understanding broaden, surrender to the wishes of the parents shows honor. The youth senses the great care and responsibility the parents have had for his or her welfare: the providing of a home, food, clothing, education, an atmosphere of spirituality, recreational advantages. All these have cost the parents money and effort, and the considerate child recognizes the expenditure and returns honor.

When in his letter to the Ephesian Church Paul used the thought about honoring father or mother, he was quoting, and not advancing an original thought. The original was the Fifth of the Ten Commandments, and as that Law was intended to have only a secular status, and not meant to be the code for a perfect Christian life, the promise, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," referred only to the temporal life (Gal. 3: 12).

However, as with every principle of Scripture, we can apply this lesson to our spiritual life as children of our heavenly Parent. God, as the Father of all believers, is worthy of honor. To Him the Christian is indebted for this life and the opportunity to gain the eternal future.

The first and indispensable factor is mortal life; without it no one could work for the eternal. And God wisely provides this to the whole human family so as to assure an abundance of raw material from which to select material suitable for development. To Him we are indebted for the physical arrangement which makes possible the

earth to live upon, rain, sunshine, fruitful seasons. It is He who provides us our goodly mortal frame, the powers of reason and reflection, the ability to choose between values that are temporal and eternal.

More than all, we are indebted to Him for the key of knowledge which will unlock to us the door to life eternal. Apart from the knowledge contained in the Bible we should not know right from wrong. Each as a law unto himself would be inclined to display some form of self-righteousness, failing to acquire the righteousness of God.

With the Christian, honoring God is not a choice to be accepted or rejected. It is a plain demand! And our eternal existence depends upon how we meet our assignment. A man of God came to Eli the high priest in the days of little Samuel, and reproved him for the misconduct of his two sons whom he failed to restrain. Speaking for the Eternal, he uttered these words: "... them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (I Sam. 2: 30).

In the fourth century before Christ the Lord sent the Prophet Malachi with a reproving message to the decadent priesthood of Israel for their failure to honor Him as their heavenly Father: "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear" (Mal. 1: 6). They had drawn nigh with their mouth and honored Him with their lips, but their heart was far from Him. Jeremiah struck the keynote of the Christian life when he said, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth" (3: 4).

For a moment let us reflect upon the aforementioned statement in I Samuel 2: "Them that honor me I will honor." Paul clarifies that gracious promise in II Cor. 6, revealing the honors in store for God's faithful children: "Wherefore come out from among them [the world], and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (vs. 17, 18).

Paul's quotation from the Mosaic Law covers honoring both father and mother. Our elucidation to this point has covered only the paternalistic side of the parents we are to honor, applying it to our heavenly Father. Where shall we apply the "mother"? The saving knowledge of God is said to be a mother and to have children. We read in Luke 7: 35, "But wisdom is justified of all her children." These are Jesus' own words. And in Gal. 4: 26, Paul, speaking of this same divine knowledge, says: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." It is impossible to honor the one without honoring the other, to honor the Father without honoring the mother, or His divine message to men. We cannot honor God if disbelieving His Word or failing to surrender to its mandates.

"Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise." The gracious promise for honoring our spiritual Father and Mother is fully spelled out in Isaiah 58: 13, 14, "If thou turn away thy foot . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, . . . for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Your Questions Answered



BIBLICAL

PERSONAL

CURRENT

Do you have a question? Personal replies to Biblical questions will be sent to any correspondent, and counsel will be offered on problems pertaining to the spiritual life. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will publish only the most helpful discussions for the benefit of other readers. No names shall be mentioned.

Please explain: "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time."

We read in II Thess. 2: 6, 7, "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

To get an insight into the meaning of these verses we need to analyze the verses preceding them. Verse 2 reveals that Christ's coming was not then nigh at hand as many believed in apostolic times. Jesus had informed His hearers that He was as a nobleman going into a far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom and to return; that it would be after "a long time" that He would return to reckon with His servants. Now in verse 3 Paul gives another factor of the program leading up to the coming of Christ. "That day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

A falling away from the truth is clearly indicated here. A power should arise which should wear out the saints of God and cast the truth to the ground (Dan. 7: 21, 22; 8: 11, 12).

Now Paul reveals to us that this power had already begun working in his day: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (II Thess. 2: 7, 8). The phrase, "only he who now letteth will let," uses the word "let" in the archaic sense, meaning, "to hinder." The newer translations employ the following phrasing: "he who checks it now will check it"; "he who now is the obstacle"; "he who now is holding it in will check it"; "he who now restrains it."

Apparently, some force of circumstances present at that time was hindering the growth of the Papal church which then was just in its infancy. It seems logical to suppose that this was paganism. Paganism with its worship of mundane gods and goddesses had taken a firm hold on the minds of men long before the time of Jesus and the Apostolic Age. Furthermore, Judaism, with its worship of the one true God, was too weak and impotent in the closing centuries before Christ to make much headway against the flood of paganism. However, Christ's birth, ministry, death and resurrection, and the accomplishments of the apostles during the years immediately following Christ's ascension, started something. His Church grew by leaps and bounds. The seasons of persecution that flared from time to time drove the Christians into

the far reaches of the Roman Empire. And everywhere they went they carried the good news of Christ. Hence, their persecution was the seed of the early Church.

But, as every highly successful manufactured article has its imitations in the market place, and every healthy body has its parasites, it should not be surprising that Christ's true Church should have its counterfeit. And it did. The Bible both foretells and reports it, and history verifies it. Not long after Jesus' apostles were removed from the scene of action men arose, who, not content with the simplicity of the teachings of Jesus, formulated religion after their own liking, and wandered far from the precepts of Christ.

This movement was under way at the time Paul wrote II Thess. 2: 8, the "mystery of iniquity" was already working. It was called a Christian movement but it was not; it was a counterfeit. Of course, during the early centuries Christ's true Church existed. There were groups of people who still were living the true religion of Christ, and they continued to exist in ever diminishing numbers until the beginning of the seventh century. However, the counterfeit church, Papacy, could make no phenomenal progress as long as the people could not be lured away from the worship of their pagan gods. There was Mithras, Isis, and many others. History relates that Mithras and Christ were worshiped side by side in some of the pagan temples, and modern scholars declare that Mithraism proved such a rival to Christianity (meaning, of course, the brand of Christianity sponsored by the Papacy), that for a time their fate hung in the balance.

During this period the growth of Papacy was hindered or restrained or checked by paganism which was still a power to be reckoned with. But a time was to come when that hindrance would be taken out of the way. It was accomplished by absorption. The Papacy became paganism re-dressed. Doctrinally they absorbed paganism: the immortality of the soul, the doctrine of the atonement, going to heaven at death, the re-incarnation of Christ, the trinity, eternal torment, original sin.

They also absorbed paganism in their methods of worship. The worship of many pagan gods was replaced by the worship of Christ, by the worship of the Virgin, the saints and martyrs. The gradual conversion of the pagans to the Papal fold reached its climax in 320 A. D. when Constantine, the once pagan emperor of Rome, was converted to Papacy and lured the pagans into the Papal fold by offering a white garment and thirty pieces of silver to each new convert. Then paganism no longer hindered, Papacy had won.

Revelation 13 pictures this struggle between these sinister forces as a contest between the dragon and the beast. The dragon (paganism) suffered a deadly wound by the advent of Papacy, and that deadly wound was healed when Papacy absorbed paganism, as we have already shown.

Another point that identifies the "Wicked" or "mystery of iniquity" of II Thess. 2: 7, 8, is that that power was still to be in existence when Christ returns to destroy all who oppose Him. The Catholic Church still is with us and is going strong, and will be here still when Christ appears to judge the earth.

Gems of Life for Youth

DECISION

"But Daniel purposed in his heart . . ." (Dan. 1:8).

HERE is one quality of mind which of all others is most likely to make for success if combined with talents, or to ruin them without it. We allude to that quality of the mind which under given circumstances acts with a mathematical precision.

There are occasions when action must be taken at once. There is no time for long and careful calculation of chances. The occasion calls for immediate action; and the call must be met, or time goes by, and our utmost exertions cannot bring it back. At such times is seen the triumph of those who have carefully trained all their faculties to a habit of prompt decision. They seize the occasion, and make the thought start into instant action; they at once plan and perform, resolve and execute.

Firm decision was the secret of Daniel's success, as also of his three friends, in Babylon. Crises developed continually, but they saw the course they should take, though they knew not what the consequences might be, they launched out on what firmly believed to be right and God helped them through.

It is but a truism to say that there can be no success in life without decision of character. Even brains are secondary in importance to will. The intellect is but the half of a man; the will is the driving-wheel, the spring of motive power. A vacillating man, no matter what his abilities, is invariably pushed aside in the race of life by one of determined will. It is he who resolves to succeed, and at every fresh rebuff begins resolutely again, that reaches the goal. The shores of fortune are covered with the stranded wrecks of men of brilliant abilities, but who have lacked courage, faith, and decision, and have therefore perished in sight of more resolute, but less capable adventurers, who succeeded in making port. Hundreds of men go to their graves in obscurity who have remained obscure only because they lacked the pluck to make the first effort, and who, could they only have resolved to begin, would have astonished the world by their achievements and successes.

What would have happened to the early Church had not the Apostle Paul, upon receiving his commission, made his decision to *act* for the cause of his Master? Christ chose him for a special work; he responded immediately; he "conferred not with

flesh and blood" (Gal. 1:16). The decision was his own.

To do anything in this world that is worth doing we must not stand shivering on the bank, and thinking of the cold and the danger, but jump in and *do* earnestly whatever must be done. The world was not made for slow, squeamish, fastidious men but for those who act promptly and with power. Obstacles and perplexities every man must meet, and he must either conquer them or they will conquer him. Hesitation is a sign of weakness, for inasmuch as the comparative good and evil of the different modes of action about which we hesitate are seldom equally balanced, a strong mind should perceive the slightest inclination of the beam with the glance of an eagle. To be forever wavering and hesitating, now veering to this side and then to that, halts progress and encumbers the mind with all the misery that follows continual doubt.

He who doubts and wavers is like a wave of the sea, "driven with the wind and tossed" (Jas. 1:6).

A great deal of the unhappiness and much of vice in the world come because of weakness and indecision of purpose. The will, which is the central force of character, must be trained to habits of decision; otherwise it will neither be able to resist evil nor to follow good. Decision gives the power of standing firmly, when to yield, however slightly, might be only the first step in a down-hill course to ruin. Calling upon others for help to form a decision is necessary at times, but a man must so train his habits as to rely upon his own powers, and to depend upon his own courage in moments of emergency. Many are the valiant purposes formed that end merely in words; deeds intended that are never done; designs projected that are never begun; and all for the want of a little courageous decision.

There is no more beautiful trait of character to be found than that of a determined will guided by right motives. To talk beautifully is one thing, but to act with promptitude when the time of action has fully come is as far superior to the former as the brilliant sunlight surpasses the reflection of the moon.

But with all that has been urged in favor of decision, we would not be understood as advising undue haste. There are occasions when caution and delay are necessary, when to act without long careful deliberation would be madness. But when the way is clear, when there is no doubt as to what ought to be done, then it is that decision demands that an instant choice be made between the two—not to hesitate too long as to which, but to decide promptly, and then move ahead.

